



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

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FEB. 29 1996

Mr. Robert C. Joslin
Regional Forester
Southern Region
1720 Peachtree Road, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30367

Dear Mr. Joslin:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed its review of the U.S. Forest Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Amendment 22 to the Land and Resource Management Plan for Ouachita National Forest, Scott, and Polk Counties, Arkansas.

The proposed amendment is needed to recover the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), renew the shortleaf pine/bluestem ecosystem, and implement the direction provided in the Final EIS to the Management of the RCW and its Habitat on the National Forests in the Southern Region, approved June 21, 1995. The Draft EIS evaluates the proposed action and six alternatives. The proposed action is the Forest Service's preferred choice, which increases the current objective of 50 RCW breeding groups to 250 groups and establishes a new Management Area (MA-22), encompassing 155,010 acres on the Ouachita National Forest.

The EIS indicates that the renewal of the shortleaf pine/bluestem grasses ecosystem and recovery of the RCW will tend to maximize future options. Short term uses will not be adversely effected, but harvest strategies will be different. Long term, the proposed action should have a much needed beneficial impact to the recovery of the endangered RCW.

The EPA rates your DEIS as "LO," i.e., EPA has "Lack of Objections" to the lead agency's preferred alternative. Our classification will be published in the Federal Register according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, to inform the public of our views on proposed Federal actions.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the DEIS. We request that you send our office one copy of the Final EIS at the same time that it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, (2251A), EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Sincerely yours,

Michael P. Jansky, P.E.

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Regional Environmental Review Coordinator